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The Ombudsman wishes to express great appreciation to the young people who participated in these interviews, and to the foster parents and caseworkers who helped make them possible.

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## **The Ombudsman takes immediate action to protect an infant from harm.**

**A** community professional contacted the Ombudsman with her concern that DCFS was not moving to protect an infant whose mother was being discharged from a residential drug treatment facility. The mother was planning to leave the facility, with her infant, that day. The mother had a history of substance abuse, domestic violence, mental health problems, and extreme drug-seeking behavior. She was planning to take a bus to her home in another part of the state, and be picked up at the other end by her boyfriend, who was also considered a danger to the child. The professional believed that the DCFS office in this city was hesitant to intervene because it wanted the DCFS office in the mother's home city to retain responsibility for this family. (Two of the mother's children were currently in foster care in that city, with petitions filed for terminating her parental rights.)

The Ombudsman immediately contacted DCFS, which informed the Ombudsman that it had directed the treatment facility not to allow the mother to leave with the child, and to call the police if she attempted to do so. Unbeknownst to DCFS, however, the facility had in fact decided to allow the mother to leave with the infant and had decided against calling law enforcement or CPS in order to avoid upsetting the mother. The professional was unable to reach DCFS to report this development, and again contacted the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman immediately contacted DCFS, which swiftly intervened to prevent the mother from taking the infant on the bus. In the course of investigating this complaint, the Ombudsman learned that when DCFS received the professional's CPS report earlier that day, a dispute ensued between that office and the DCFS office in the mother's home city regarding which office should be responsible for placing this infant. In sharing information showing that the infant was at imminent risk of harm, the Ombudsman assisted the two offices in refocusing their priorities on swift intervention to protect the child.

**Contacting the Ombudsman.**

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The report is also available at the Ombudsman Web site:  
[www.governor.wa.gov/ofco](http://www.governor.wa.gov/ofco)

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